

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 20:13-21 | Session 57 | Troas to Miletus

A.D. 59

In Troas, Paul spent seven days there. On his last night he gathered all the believers together as he preached for hours, trying to share with them everything possible about *Christ's gospel*, the same good news he had preached to them during his last visit (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). After the excitement of the young man, Eutychus, falling asleep and consequently falling out of the third story window, Paul, departed from the believers, continuing on his journey back to Jerusalem.

Verse 13,14—

And we went before to ship, again we see Luke including himself in the traveling group, however Paul was not with them, rather he decided to go by foot from Troas to Assos where Luke and the others would pick him up. Here is an example of first hand writing by Luke. We have no idea why Paul wanted to walk, how long it took him, or if he was alone. There is no need to try and make some sort of application for ourselves, e.g., “Sometimes we must walk the Christian life alone!” This sort of made-up stuff is nonsense. The inclusion of these two verses adds a sense of realness and humanness to the account. Nonetheless, Luke records, **he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and come to Mitylene.**

Verse 15,16—

Luke continues plotting out the travel itinerary for us, **we came the next day...and the next day...and the next day. Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend time in Asia.** If anything, these historical notes are interesting and they present to us an understanding of Paul's rush to get to **Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost.**

Verse 17—

Rather than go to Ephesus, where there had been an **uproar** (Acts 19:29-20:1) because of his preaching, he instead sends for the **elders of the church** to come and meet him in **Miletus**. It is from this verse (and a few others) that many local churches have determined there must be more than one pastor in a local church. I used to believe in what is called the *plurality of pastors* in fact our church has multiple pastors at one time. I will discuss why I no longer believe a local church should have multiple pastors in a moment.

Verse 18-20—

Having now all the elders from Ephesus, Paul pours out his heart to them, reminding them of what he did in Ephesus. First, he **served the Lord with humility of mind**; he didn't come to them to rule over them. Last week, a friend of mine who moved out of state told me that the church he found was just *okay*, but *the pastor yells at us a lot*.

Maybe you've been in a church like that. Do you ever wonder who gets to yell at the pastor? When a pastor rules with an iron fist, he is not exhibiting **humbleness of mind**. *Second*, Paul also served the Lord with **many tears**, there is nothing wrong with tearful sorrow; Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you many tears.*” (2 Cor. 2:4). To the Philippians Paul wrote, “*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.*” (Philippians 3:18). Third, he served the Lord in **temptations, which befell me by the lying wait of the Jews** (Judeans). The word **temptations** in the context here probably is better understood as a *trial, or affliction*. He is most likely to all the times this happened, but may have had the most recent trial mentioned in verse 3. He kept moving forward in his service to the Lord in the midst of his trials. Finally, he tells them **I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you**. He says in verse 27 that he taught the whole counsel of God. Paul did nothing in secret. He **showed** them Christ **and taught** them in **public**. And in Ephesus he did this from house to house. It's my belief that the elders Paul is meeting with are not from one church in Ephesus, but from many churches which met in various houses. Paul went to each little local church and taught them about Christ.

Verse 20—

Testifying...repentance toward God. I have been teaching that in order to be saved, there is no repentance required; only belief (Acts 13:38-39; Ephesians 2:8,9). But, Aha! Some might say, *see, here Paul teaches that one must repent in order to be a Christian*. A quick reading of that verse might lead many to think that, and indeed they do. But let's look at it more closely. The verse says Paul was **testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks**. If we read this in a natural way, it says Paul testified to the Jews, and Paul testified to the Greeks. Two different groups, but were there two different messages, or gospels? I think so.

What did he **testify**? To the **Jews, repentance toward God**. This is the exact same gospel message that has been preached to the Jews since chapter two of Acts. Paul continued preaching this gospel to the Jews. So, he taught **repentance toward God** to the Jews, but then to the **Greeks** Paul says he taught **and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ**. We have to rightly divide this verse. When we do, it fits perfectly with the pattern we have seen all through the books of Acts. The Jews had to repent to God for killing the Messiah, and the Gentiles only had to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith are always presented as separable. Not inseparable as many people teach and get wrong.